

Testimony to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
Re: HB 5030  
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Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify about HB 5030, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GENERAL EDUCATION CORE OF COURSES.

I am Dr. Thomas Burkholder, a professor and a member of the CCSU faculty since 1992. In my time there, I have served as department chair of Chemistry and Biochemistry and as chair of the university curriculum committee. I am also currently on a committee charged by the Faculty Senate in October, 2010 to determine if there were a need and/or desire to modify general education at CCSU<sup>1</sup> and if there were such a desire, to design a new program. I would like to talk about our experiences in changing the general education program at CCSU.

When the committee began constructing a proposed revision to general education, we were mindful of the needs of not only the 10,000 undergraduates at CCSU but also the 1400 transfer students, about half of whom come from the Community Colleges and half come from other four-year institutions in and out of state. Most of the difficulties I saw with transfer students as department chair were not with the community colleges, with whom we have clear articulation, but with other four-year private and out-of-state public universities. The elective credits we are proposing in general education and broader categories mean that transfer credits are more likely to fulfill requirements.

One reason I was drafted to serve on this committee was that I had collected information about the General Education programs at our ten peer institutions<sup>2</sup> as well as the other CSU's and UCONN. Although these programs varied from 36 to more than 50 credits, an overwhelming majority of the programs required two courses focused on writing and one or more quantitative reasoning course, such as math or statistics.

CCSU's current program requires 43-46 credits in four skill areas and four study areas. Within that structure the students are required to take a literature course, history course, two international courses and a fitness/wellness course encumbering 8-14 credits of the program. The committee conducted a series of open meetings and a survey in Fall 2010 and determined in Spring 2011 that there was indeed a desire to modify general education at CCSU

The committee then moved on to determining what faculty and students thought General Education should look like. We looked at our peer institutions and resources from the American Association of Colleges and Universities<sup>3</sup> and the Regulations for Licensure and Accreditation

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<sup>1</sup> CCSU Faculty Senate Bill 10.11.007B <http://www.ccsu.edu/page.cfm?p=7764> approved and signed by President Miller on October 19, 2010

<sup>2</sup> List of Peer Institutions approved by CSU System Office, and the Connecticut Department of Higher Education to compare performance in a wide range of areas. <http://www.ccsu.edu/page.cfm?p=4332>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.aacu.org/resources/generaleducation/index.cfm>

of Institutions and Programs of Higher Learning promulgated by the Board of Governors<sup>4</sup> (then DHE) which outline the requirements for general education.

We then conducted a survey to which over 300 students and faculty responded in Spring 2011<sup>5</sup>. The committee started a blog,<sup>6</sup> drafted four possible designs<sup>7</sup> and held a series of four open meetings to discuss them. The designs all presupposed that the minimum number of credits necessary would be 44, based on the 130 credits required in B.S.Ed. and some other B.S. programs such as engineering<sup>8</sup>. The designs ranged from minor changes to the existing program to major revisions including foreign language proficiency, calculus requirement and a course abroad requirement to better meet CCSU's identified Element of Distinction, International Education<sup>9</sup>.

Feedback from open meetings led the committee to its current draft<sup>10</sup> which proposes a much simplified program requiring

Two foundational courses in writing and critical inquiry and  
6 credits minimum in: Arts & Culture, Self & Society, Physical & Natural Worlds and,  
Mathematical & Statistical Understanding  
The remainder of General Education may be fulfilled by electives in the four areas.

We also conducted a separate survey of the students; preliminary results look very similar to those of the survey conducted last Spring. The student newspaper, *The Recorder*, has sent a reporter to our committee meetings and published several articles<sup>11</sup> & <sup>12</sup>. Students have posted thoughtful comments<sup>13</sup> and articles<sup>14</sup> on the blog. There was good student attendance at the open meetings and at our most recent meeting, there was even a proposal for general education design from the Student Government president, whose proposal<sup>15</sup> was more flexible than what we had proposed in December. This student response was heartening since the changes we propose will have little direct effect on them.

Our current proposal, subject to final committee approval, will go to the Faculty Senate and

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ctdhe.org/regs/RegsAcad.htm> Sections 10a-34-15(b) and 10a-34-17(e)

<sup>5</sup> <http://you.ccsu.edu/gened/2011/05/16/summary-of-results-of-general-education-survey-available/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://you.ccsu.edu/gened>

<sup>7</sup> [http://you.ccsu.edu/gened/files/2011/10/Ad-Hoc-Gen-Ed-Report-for-Faculty-Senate\\_24Oct2011.pdf](http://you.ccsu.edu/gened/files/2011/10/Ad-Hoc-Gen-Ed-Report-for-Faculty-Senate_24Oct2011.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> This interpretation may not be correct. It may be that the minimum is 40 credits. See DHE regs above.

<sup>9</sup> CCSU identifies the following as among its elements of distinction within the Connecticut State University system of four constituent universities:

International Education  
Workforce and State Economic Development  
Community Engagement  
Interdisciplinary Studies and Cross-Cultural Initiatives

<sup>10</sup> [http://you.ccsu.edu/gened/files/2011/12/Ad-Hoc-Gen-Ed-Report-for-Faculty-Senate\\_5Dec2011.pdf](http://you.ccsu.edu/gened/files/2011/12/Ad-Hoc-Gen-Ed-Report-for-Faculty-Senate_5Dec2011.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <http://centralrecorder.com/2011/05/11/general-education-blog-will-allow-campus-input/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://centralrecorder.com/2012/01/29/sga-president-brings-proposal-to-gen-ed-meeting/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://you.ccsu.edu/gened/2011/10/24/initial-ideas-from-the-ad-hoc-gen-ed-committee/#comment-19>

<sup>14</sup> <http://you.ccsu.edu/gened/2011/05/06/a-call-for-relevant-general-education/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://you.ccsu.edu/gened/2012/01/26/saa-proposal/>

University Curriculum committee in early March. If the design is approved, a second committee will be appointed by the Faculty Senate to implement the design.

I wanted to share this information with you so that you'll appreciate how much time and attention the entire CCSU community, including faculty and students, has put into revising our General Education program. CCSU faculty are actively making revisions in order to give students the skills and background they'll need to be successful in their careers.

Thank you very much for your time.